

The Meaning of Tiananmen



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- Dan Rather, reporting from Tiananmen Square in late May/early June 1989

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'reeducation' and pressure to recant his position. Liu Xiaobo, China's preeminent social critic,

was also taken into custody and has yet to be released. The authorities are certainly nervous, but they're not the only ones who should be.

Around the world, the events in Beijing on June 3-4, 1989, have been commemorated with solemn speeches and ceremonies, each crafted to reflect the glory of Beijing's courageous citizenry onto the current projects of the official world in a light filtered by its present interests. Those governments that owe their present existence to the consequences of the June events in Eastern Europe have the opportunity once again to express their gratitude that the wind blew west that year. Refugee members of the Chinese expatriate elite who were at the Square and who have since used the backs of dead heroes as the stepping stones to their own contemptible business successes may, like Chai Ling, speak dismissively of the former movement, others, less adaptable, like Liu Binyan, of missed career opportunities and portfolios denied them by the "adventurism" of the students and the government's reaction.

Fundamentalist Maoists and other Marxist-Leninist types seek to identify themselves with the 1989 Protest Movement, despite the fact that the movement constituted itself as an organic opposition against precisely the kind of society Marxism-Leninism has always created. The official leaders of the West attempt to distract the world from their increasing economic dependence on, and support of, China's elite by putting the slogans of their market dictatorship and its decrepit parliamentary facade into the mouths of Chinese corpses, making them appear to have died for Niketown instead of Autonomous Beijing. Human Rights activists, trade-unionists and spokespersons for the Chinese democracy movement deplore the massacre of non-violent protesters and the continued

repression of political, labor and religious oppositionists, without calling for the liquidation of the bureaucratic class in whose interest this ongoing reaction is structurally embedded. When the citizens of Beijing are mentioned, it is largely as victims, not as actors. Those whose voices should be loudest of all are still stifled.

What, it should instead be asked, were the achievements of the 'Hundred Million Heroes' who took to the streets and in so doing, took possession of their city, of those who joined them from all over the country, and of those who emulated them elsewhere in metropolitan China?

The first of these must be the triumph of having developed an enduring culture of resistance to the totalitarian state-capitalist dictatorship of the Communist Party of China. That the citizens of Beijing were able to coordinate their actions swiftly enough to take advantage of the opportunity provided for a manifestation of public opinion by the death of the liberal former Party Secretary Hu Yaobang is only one example of the formidable organizational capacity with which this culture has been endowed. This oppositional culture had its beginnings in 1968 when groups of workers, ex-soldiers, students and peasants who had been mobilized against reformist Party bureaucrats (among them Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping) by the circle of extremist ideologues around Mao Zedong during the phony "Cultural Revolution," began to turn it instead into an authentic grassroots movement for a self-organized "People's Commune of China" against the state. They also established linkages and routes for information, underground libraries, and escape routes for fugitives. Continuity in the development of this current to the present may be seen in the contemporaneous Beijing group "North Star," which included Chen Zeming, one of the "black hands (i.e. hidden organizers)" later alleged to be behind the Beijing events of 1989. On a citywide scale, the self-organizational capabilities of the Beijing populace were first to become famously evident in the open defiance of the more than 200,000 people who demonstrated against the Maoist regime of austerity, overwork and faith-based terror in Tiananmen Square on April 5th, 1976.

Secondly, the material existence of Autonomous Beijing as both a real occupation of physical and social space and the assertion of a living alternative to the dominant organization of

society overseen by the Communist Party, was already the repudiation of the Party's thirty years of rule. The self-organization of the Beijing citizens, the

establishment of committees that organized incoming supplies and saw to the housing of thousands of students and others from out of town, removed garbage, wrote, printed and distributed publications, not only exploded the fashionable western myth that improvements in the Chinese standard of living had suddenly depoliticized the population, but also proved, to the permanent discomfiture of our masters everywhere, that *the population of one of the largest cities on the planet can organize its affairs without the interference of government, the state, and any of its institutions.*

Thirdly, the profundity of the transformation that affected the people of Beijing moved the world. The public declaration by the thieves of Beijing that they would not rob citizens during the crisis cannot help but remind one of the similar declaration made by the thieves of the Paris during the Commune of 1871. The free delivery of food and other goods by the small entrepreneurs, the getihu, to the occupants of the square, the desertion, refusal to fire on demonstrators, and the spontaneous distribution of weapons to the crowds by elements of the PLA, as well as incidents in which public security officials warned demonstrators of the arrival of the police and army, were occasions on which people asserted their freedom precisely to the extent that they broke the laws of the economy and hierarchical power and refused the social roles to which they had been assigned. The stubborn solidarity that was extended to the movement's activists by their fellow workers when they refused to identify

"troublemakers," and by neighborhoods to snipers firing on the military occupiers, also shows that these sentiments did not wash off in warm water.

Fourthly, the events of May-June 1989 in Beijing appear as the reassertion of a critical Chinese historical consciousness over the official lies presented by totalitarian bureaucratic capitalism.

The long overdue passing of historical judgment on the more than three decades of ferocious pre-capitalist accumulation, mass-murder and starvation, the attempted erasure of Chinese history, culture and intellect, and its replacement by the simplistic idiocy of Maoism, took place on May 23rd, with the paint-filled egg attack on the massive picture of Mao Zedong, greatest oppressor in human history, by three young men from his home province of Hunan, Yu Zhijian, Yu Dongyue and Lu Decheng. The degree to which this act of signal bravery was understood and supported also marked the limit of the movement's consciousness of the meaning of its own existence in acts.

These accomplishments do not however, obscure the importance of noting the mistakes made by this unprecedented social movement as it attempted to find its way through the unknown.

Many of the shortcomings of the movement lay in its origins in a student milieu still burdened with the habits of the old Chinese scholar-gentry and its neo-Confucian role as moral repository and advisor to the imperial court. To preserve the purity of "their"

movement, students sought initially, as they had during the 1986-1987 movement, to limit contacts with and participation by the workers and other outsiders. In fact their movement only really began to resonate throughout Chinese society and raise the actual question of power when the massed citizenry of Beijing, pointedly among them the workers of Capital Steel, joined them first in support of their hunger strike and then in defiance of martial law.

Even so, when the organizers of the Workers' Autonomous Federation wanted to set up a tent in Tiananmen Square, they were confined to the outer perimeter. The authorities who suppressed the occupation of the square were not so blinkered as to their importance; the WAF tent was one of the first at which they directed their assault. The students' misdirected desire to appear as a loyal opposition to the regime (and their equally absurd thinking that this

attitude would protect them) appears repeatedly as the greatest limitation of a movement which had already broken the bonds of loyalty in the eyes of China's masters, and was going to be made to pay for it. The student's nearly complete misunderstanding of the nature of legitimacy under bureaucratic power and the illusion that the Party could be negotiated with, left them defenseless both in terms of the theoretical means of describing their undertaking and in regards to the narrow practice of civil disobedience it led them to adopt. There were fewer who shared this view in the working-class suburbs, where large numbers were arrested for possession of weapons and ammunition: proof that there, the requisite conditions for the negation of bureaucratic capitalism were better understood.

In the three weeks during which the movement grew and developed, it was not always possible for institutions of self-rule to realize directly democratic forms, the more so as China was not a society in which the ideas of directly democratic, anti-statist, anti-capitalist social organization could be freely or legally

disseminated. Partly as a consequence, there was a lack of clarity regarding the nature of organizational forms and a fear by what was already becoming the elite of the student movement, of the consequences to their power arising from the adoption of democratic procedures. When Liu Xiaobo, "the liumang ('hooligan') intellectual", proposed elections to the student leaders, the response of one of them, Wuer Kaixi, was "what if we don't win?" On the other hand, however prominent the movement's informal leadership became, it always remained subject to the sovereign base. Again, in Wuer Kaixi's words: "Anyone in charge had to support the Tiananmen occupation. Were you to ask the students to leave, they would get rid of you." The disproportional importance of personalities, a corresponding underdevelopment of ideas of self-organization and the lack of a general critique of bureaucratic capitalism (as of world capitalism in general) were signs of the movement's relative immaturity. How really insignificant these "leading personalities"

turned out to be, once detached from the movement of which they had been a part, became only too clear later in exile. Today, the continuing preoccupation with personalities by the Chinese opposition in exile is the sign of a milieu still without a substantive oppositional politics. The feeble philosophical and psychological resistance to religion afforded by many of these same refugees serves as well as another unedifying display of their soft critical cores.

The greatness of the 1989 Protest Movement was not in its leaders, but in its rank-and-file, ordinary citizens, workers and students.

"...After June 4, under the guidance of the district and municipal governments, neighborhood committees organized 649 work teams with 156,000 members to participate in the task of restoring order to traffic and society. Neighborhood committee cadres and activists joined forces with Martial Law Enforcement Troops and the People's Police to clear away roadblocks, remove posters and slogans, and clean up the city. Altogether they cleared away roadblocks in more than 570 places, washed or painted over more than 30,000 slogans, and picked up more than 80 tons of bricks and stones, making a great contribution toward the early restoration of normal traffic and a stable situation in the capital."

Peking Evening News, August 3, 1989

The period immediately following June 4th consisted of two moments: first the repression itself, and then a frenzied renewal of economic activity with the

object of purchasing, through increases in the Chinese standard of living, the loyalty of the urban population. Progress in the application of this strategy which has continued to the present, has been uneven. The large number of unproductive state-owned enterprises has presented a serious obstacle to structural "reform", particularly in the "rust belt" of the Northeast. Sell-offs of factories to entrepreneurs or cronies of local officials have been accompanied by large-scale lay-offs of employees without pension, compensation, medical insurance or much prospect of employment. Protests have been met with repression even as they have become more

widespread and well organized. Privatization, corruption, and dispossession and poverty are, just as in the West, inextricably linked. The rapid growth of demand for office space and luxury -- or less than luxury -- homes has resulted as well in the same destruction of older communities we have seen in the West, only with fewer constraints on developers and fewer protections for neighborhoods.

In the countryside, the initial takeoff of the rural economy fueled by the breakup of the state-imposed "People's Communes" and permission given peasants to rent and farm their own plots, has begun to slow as an ever-growing army of parasitic officials have discovered ways to tap into the peasants' income stream. By the mid-nineties, peasant protests were becoming increasingly common, sometimes closing roads or attacking local Party headquarters. The geologically dubious Three Gorges Dam, the centerpiece monument of Chinese hydroelectric civilization to the outgoing generation of post-Maoist bureaucrats (of whom Li Peng is the most obvious example) and possibly the world's largest outdoor cesspool when fully backed-up, has also exacerbated the situation of the more than one million peasants in its way. It continues to be a sensitive issue. There is presently a moratorium on reporting the alluvial buildup of sediment behind the dam, the more that 100 cracks that have appeared in it, the pollution and environmental damage than has resulted from its construction, and the situation of those displaced. Many other rural Chinese are leaving the farm and heading for the cities to join the immense "floating population," presently of 114 million, there looking for work in an economy increasingly shifting to skilled labor and already oversupplied with unskilled workers. The health care system in the countryside has collapsed as hospitals have become profit-making enterprises and those who cannot pay are abandoned. The plight of those remaining in the countryside is deteriorating. Women in rural China now have the highest rate of suicide in the world.

The Chinese government's recent suppression of the already widely sold exposé of peasant life by Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao, titled "An Investigation of China's Peasantry," is but one recent demonstration of its anxiety about the state of affairs in the countryside. Although praising current efforts to ease farmer's tax burdens, the main thrust of the piece was to show how corrupt local officials undermine the well-intentioned policies of the central government.

Three years earlier, the government itself had issued a 308-page report which described farmers increasingly squeezed by local officials who levy excess fees, by a slowing rural economy and by declining crop yields from increasingly degraded land. It noted as well an increasingly confrontational tide of protest in which protesters "frequently seal-off bridges and blockade roads, storm party and government offices, coercing party committees and government, and there are even criminal acts such as attacking, trashing, looting and arson."

Concern over the continuing volatility of the countryside and the potential of protests to spread during this June may be also measured in the swiftness with which the recent protests by Shenzhen farmers against the demolition of their homes and eviction from their land were quelled.

The nature of the Communist Party has itself been affected by the changes it has wrought in society and the economy as it has moved away from the former centralized, "planned"

Marxist-Leninist models of economic management and given increasing institutional prominence to the business class whose rising power the Party wishes for its own. The price of this open accommodation of private capitalists has been the endangerment of the Party's legitimacy as the 'party of the proletariat' at a time when the Party's room to maneuver in containing working-class and peasant protests is shrinking. The occasional populist gestures of the present generation of Chinese leaders reveal what they have learned from the social-imaginary manipulations of their American competitors; whether this proves sufficient to compensate for the Party's declining identification with 'labor' is not certain.

Present conditions in China are a consequence of the passage from the murderous, accelerated accumulation of capital during the late fifties and early sixties, through the intra-bureaucratic warfare of the sixties and seventies, to the state-supervised laissez-faire of the present. This trajectory has seen -- especially

after restrictions on private economic activity outside state control were breached by massive popular pressure and the remarkable productive capacity of the Chinese people enlisted under the slogan "to get rich is glorious" --

one of the world's most rapid rises in living standards; an event which occurred not because of what the party had done, but because of what it no longer stood in the way of. To a considerable extent the export-driven economic growth of the last decade and a half has accomplished the political objectives the Party had set for it: the creation of modern corporate engines of growth which have powerfully extended Chinese markets overseas (made possible in great part by the continued suppression of workers' struggles for increased wages and safety measures -- of the latter, an article by Columbia law professor John Fabian Witt cited in the May 8, 2004 Asian Labour News reported the official figure that 14,675 Chinese workers had died on the job last year, but went on to note that "some observers suggest the number may be closer to 120,000."), the growth of a class of more than one million million-yuan entrepreneurs, the development of a middle-class consumer sector replete with all the cars and culture, fashion and fleeting fame found in the West, the ability through its export-generated surplus to obtain goods and technology hitherto unavailable for the modernization and expansion of both the economic and military spheres, and the quiescence of much of the intelligentsia which, having thrown itself "into the sea" of commerce, is now acquiring a stake in the current arrangements of power. This will tend to further fragment the intelligentsia at the same time that the education of a new generation in business values, as was pointed out this spring by Fang Lizhi, will undermine its solidarity with the urban working class and peasantry and its commitment to social change.

The strategy of privatizing the old state enterprises will do more than just empower a new stratum of entrepreneurs dependent on the Party for its position and continued well-being. Hit on the one hand by the movement of privatization and on the other by the surge in the floating population as more and more peasants are driven off the land, the old industrial working class will be increasingly marginalized precisely as its material position worsens and its militancy becomes more marked. As reported by the Hong Kong Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy, the number of large-scale protests in China had nearly tripled to 170,000 in the year 2000 from 1998. Many of these demonstrations were in cities where unemployed workers from state owned enterprises and migrant workers made for a potentially explosive combination. It follows that organizing links between the floating population and the urban

working class will be crucial for success in future struggles.

During the course of this process, structural problems, such as lack of transportation infrastructure or sufficient available energy resources, have created temporary bottlenecks that are for the most part being rapidly being overcome. Barriers to Chinese economic expansion overseas have been reduced, notably by China's entry into international trade bodies such as the WID. More serious and intractable difficulties reside in the continuing disparities of wealth between cities and the countryside, between coastal and riparian areas of economic growth and inland areas of stagnation, and in the growing environmental crisis created by decades of unchecked, badly planned industrial development. One estimate predicts a 25 percent loss in arable land, a 40 percent increase in water needs, a 230 to 290

percent increase in wastewater, a 40 percent increase in particulate emissions, and a 150

percent increase in sulfur dioxide emissions by 2020. The declining quality of water and air, along with the exhaustion of aquifers and soil, will increase pressures on the Chinese state to both save and protect what is left, and to obtain these resources elsewhere.

"In 1996, the residents of Tangshan City took to the streets to protest the pollution emanating from Tongda Rubber, a tire-recycling plant. The air pollution from the factory was causing headaches, dizziness, nausea, rashes, and insomnia. In the face of their complaints, local officials threatened protesters with loss of their jobs and pensions. In a showdown, 700

residents blockaded the factory, while factory workers rallied against the plant closure. The local Tangshan government eventually ordered the plant shut down."

- from The River Runs Black by E. Economy (2004), page85

With new conditions of development, new forms of resistance to exploitation and the Party's control of society have also arisen. Individual freedoms have widened where, as temporary expedients, they serve an expanding consumer economy whose growth is inextricably linked to the survival of the Communist Party of China. The creation of a middle class to world standards has caused this class to demand what it imagines to be a world-class standard (of middle-class

living), too. As the non-resident 'floating population' becomes more and more skilled, it has begun to demand guarantees previously withheld from it as well. The death of graphic artist Jun Zhigang at a detention center for non-residents led to a popular outcry that may result in lasting reform to the system of detentions. The arrest of those few souls brave enough, like Liu Di, the 'Stainless Steel Mouse', to publish statements of solidarity with critics of the regime on the Internet has led to campaigns to see them and enlarge the zone of free expression in the electronic media. Despite the Great Firewall created by the Party's Public Security Bureau and manned by 30,000 operatives, the censorship of information coming into China is proving a difficult task. In an effort to contain the incoming tide, the government has now begun to move against text messaging. These forms of sometimes tolerated resistance, so long as they remain isolated, offer by themselves no serious danger to the enormous apparatus of violent repression which remains the chief protection of Chinese bureaucratic capitalism. The figure given this March (and later retracted) by Chinese lawmaker Chen Zhonglin indicate that nearly 10,000 people are officially murdered by the state every year, a considerable surprise to Amnesty International which had estimated the number at no more than 2,000. Despite the seasonal anti-Taiwanese independence rhetoric, much, if not most, of the Chinese effort to modernize its armed forces has consisted of establishing rapid-reaction units that can be airlifted within China to suppress demonstrations, strikes and occupations.

In sum, none of the developments of the last decade and a half indicate any qualitative change in the nature of bureaucratic rule. Nor has there been any real resolution of the problems that gave rise to the Protest Movement of 1989. The Communist Party's solution -

rapid marketization/privatization, generation of a middle class consumer economy, plus a strong infusion of nationalism, has delayed the moment of crisis while increasing the scale of displacement and alienation in many quarters, and the scale of expectations in others.

Corruption continues on a colossal scale. PRC Auditor General Li Jinhua recently declared that 41 out of 55 government departments had instances of "malpractice." Cited as an example was the fate of poverty relief funds in Chongqing, of which only 0.3% found their way into the hands of those intended to receive them. Strikes and protests in general have increased and there has been the (re)emergence, both in many parts of China, and as far overseas as

Algeria, of a robust Chinese workers' culture of protest. Either the coming death of Zhao Ziyang or the developing crisis of sovereignty in Hong Kong may provide the catalyst for a restatement of the unresolved grievances festering throughout China, forming a clear opening for yet another "return of the repressed" in which everything may once again be questioned. The specter of Autonomous Beijing continues to haunt the rulers of Zhongnanhai.

But any new manifestation of autonomous organization must realize that its simple existence already constitutes an act of war and will mean a resumption of hostilities. To succeed, it

must not only have resolved fundamental questions of organizational form and coordination between sectors, and ensure that power always resides in the general assemblies that directly and democratically determine its policies and measures. It must also thoroughly discard any illusions about the democratic nature of the marketplace, the protection of liberties afforded by the rule of law unsecured and unlegitimated by the sovereign base, or about the desirability of making allies of reformist bureaucrats. The federation of free cities and countryside where this new power has established itself must be understood as the supersession of all states past, present, and future. This time too, the movement cannot have any illusions about the fate awaiting it if it is unable to sustain its momentum; there will be no alternative to armed conflict except total defeat. Desertions and refusals to follow orders have been shown to be by themselves sadly insufficient. If, in the words of Lu Xun, written in blood on the side of a burnt-out Beijing bus, "Blood debts must be repaid in blood", then it is best that new ones not be lightly incurred, and that the initiative, once seized, never be yielded.

It is the hidden dragon of this other kind of sovereignty that makes this world quake and dissemble about what happened in Beijing during those three weeks in May/June 1989 when students and intellectuals were first emboldened to take to the streets in defiance of the authorities and drove their singing, chanting, marching spearhead into the vampire heart of the legitimacy of China's late-Maoist regime. And it is something that could happen anywhere, anytime that people decide to organize themselves directly for their own interests and take control of their lives. No government looks forward to events like these for the simple reason that acts of this sort are the living repudiation of the false principles of representation and authority that lie at the foundation of every government and every state that makes up this rotting civilization. Were the

populations of Washington D.C. or London to take over their urban social space, administer it directly and democratically themselves and begin to transform it in their interests, they would find themselves no better protected by

"democracy" against the violence of "their" governments than the citizens of Beijing were protected by "communism" against theirs. This is a lesson already well-known in Paris, Barcelona, Budapest and Kwangju.

In the process of expanding social reproduction and submitting to the dictates of the marketplace directly instead of through the mediation of state planning, China has become the factory of the world. Conditions in this factory are appalling, as much from the activities of foreign capitalists as from indigenous ones. These foreign investors, in addition to enriching themselves through their Chinese operations, are able to derive a competitive pricing advantage through the state-assisted depression of Chinese workers' wages at the same time they drive down the cost of labor generally and globally, including of course, (both as a result of reductions of wages, benefits, etc., but also through attacks on government-sponsored social programs and services -- neoliberalism abroad and neoconservativism at home, as it were) the cost of labor in the developed countries where they are headquartered.

Even elements of Chinese-style superexploitative social control have appeared, as when Walmart, one of the great beneficiaries of the disempowerment of (subcontracted) Chinese workers, was reported to have instituted a policy of locking their US night shift workers into their plants. Later it has been reported that a number of other US companies now do likewise.

Developments in the march of exploitation abroad are rarely without reciprocal effects at home, as are developments against it.

Ordinary people in China and in the United States have the same interests and the same enemies. Just as plutocrats east and west can collaborate in the dispossession, exploitation and impoverishment of each others' workers, so can these workers and all those who are fighting against the dictatorship of the marketplace, the security state, nationalism, religion

and ideology in general, collaborate against the global elite. In the publicizing of exemplary actions, such as the demonstrations and rail blockages by textile workers at the Tieshu textile factory in Suizhou, Hubei Province, or the plight of

those who stand in desperate need of support, like the imprisoned organizers of the labor actions at the Liaoyang Ferro-Alloy plant in Liaoning province during March of last year, there is an opportunity for an expression of the admiration and solidarity needed to build an international movement against capital and domination. There is also possible the realization that when American workers fight their enemies, they do not fight alone.

The need for a critique of the failure of the unions during such events as the recent west coast Safeway strike, and for an analysis of such actions as the successful wildcat highway blockages by independent truckers in Los Angeles, obliges local opponents of class-society in any case to address the limitations of present labor struggles and possible means for overcoming them. Our fights do not exist in a vacuum. The methods of contestation being developed in the factories of China should be considered in this light as well. Good examples are contagious and reinforce each other. Just as the greatest assistance the Chinese workers'

movement could give us in our war against capital is in the example of their acts, so the greatest aid we might give in return would be the generalization of our struggles against all aspects of this society of domination, across union jurisdictions and sectoral lines between businesses and institutions, and ultimately across national borders, to the point where, society-wide and planet-wide, people begin to discover the power to take control of their lives altogether, beginning the greatest adventure of them all.

Chinese 'anarchists' sent home

Algiers -- Algeria has sent home at least nine Chinese building workers for committing "acts of anarchy" in a pay dispute, press reports and Chinese diplomats in the north African country said on Monday.

The construction labourers several times put up roadblocks near Tiaret, a town 340km southwest of the coastal capital, at the end of January to demonstrate over three months of wage arrears.

During the protest, which also concerned money not sent to their families in China, the workers trashed a police car and an ambulance, le Quotidien d'Oran reported.

Thousands of Chinese expatriates are employed in Algeria's construction

industry, working on sites for new housing.

In Algiers, security forces stopped them marching on their embassy and 10 protesters, considered to be the ringleaders by police, were arrested, the Oran Daily and Le Jeune Independant reported.

A Chinese embassy official confirmed that the incidents had taken place and said that nine people, accused of "acts on anarchy" and breaking the law, were flown home at the end of March.

News24.com, edited by Anthea Jonathan, April 26th 2004

Fifteen years of repression have succeeded neither in completely halting the subterranean progress of the movement of opposition, nor in limiting its extent. Indeed, as events this August in Chongqing attest, the class struggle in China may be entering a new phase, wherein the very natures of the ownership of the means of production and of the relations of production themselves can be called directly into question. There, at the Chongqing Shanhua Special Vehicle Factory (former PLA Factory 3403), located in Huaxi town in the Ba'an district of Chongqing municipality, workers, already owed substantial unpaid wages and denied promised medical insurance, responded to the privatization and restructuration of their factory with a remarkable counteroffensive of their own:

"The workers launched their protest action to signal their determined opposition to the local government's recent selling off the factory, which was worth 200 million Yuan, to a private company for a price of only 22 million Yuan. They are angry that the sale was not put out to public tender, and they have made a counterproposal to the government whereby the workers themselves would purchase the factory at a higher price than the one already agreed to and would then operate the factory on a collective and democratic management basis."

China Labour Bulletin, Issue No. 19 (22 September 2004)

The workers went on strike and occupied their plant on August 18th. After they had rebuffed an attempt by the district government and the Public Security Bureau to arrest their leaders under the pretext of conducting an investigation, and a subterfuge begun by the Chongqing Municipal Committee to negotiate the removal of confidential documents and weapons (but which might well have jeopardized evidence the workers held of financial impropriety by the factory

manager), the authorities resorted, predictably, to force. In the early morning hours of August 30th, more than 1,000 police and paramilitary People's Armed Police forced their way onto the factory and dormitory grounds. During the course of their occupation there were instances of brutality and the disappearance of a young worker. The same day personnel from the new owner, Endurance Industrial Stock Co. Ltd., entered to take over the factory and general area.

Here then is an example of the level to which the struggle between workers and the alliance of bureaucrats and private capitalists that presently manages China has now risen. If the end of bureaucratic capitalism in China has been postponed, its future remains far from secure.

Burt Green (September 26th, 2004) originally published in Anarchy: a Journal of Desire Armed, issue 58.